trading. It reduces administrative overheads, reduces paper and postage bills. The redundant and/or duplicate processes are eleminated which reduces manual processing cost and further it reduces money tied up in stock The transaction time is reduced becasue of faster information flow and instant availability. EDI when implemented in all regulations and facilitory agencies would be beneficial for Importers/Exporters as they would be able to transact documents electronically with all these agencies sitting in their office through computers, which will reduce transaction time considerably

(e) Yes Sir.

(f) This Ministry had hosted three major international EDI events in New Delhi from 27th Oct.'96 2nd Nov.'1996. These events are

(i) 13st Asia EDIFACT Board meeting

(ii) 4th UN/ESCAP Network on Trade Facilitation.

(iii) EDICOM'96 (Asia Pacific Conference and Exhibition on EDI)

(g) The advantage of hosting these events were as follows :

- India was exposed to the world wide developments in EDI.
- It created awareness in the Potential EDI functionaries/users.
- During these meetings Indian Organisations got the opportunity to discuss their projects with the EDI experts invited from all around the world.
- Since around 200 foreign participants attended these meetings a considerable amount of Foreign Exchange was earned through their stay.

The expenditure statement is being consolidated.

Charter of Demands by Officers of RRBs

3159. SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the All India Rural Bank Officers Organisations has submitted its charter of demands to the Government in the recent past; and

(b) if so, the main points put forth therein and the action taken or being taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) and (b). All India Gramin Bank Workers' Organisation and All India Gramin Bank Officers Organisation have submitted a reprersentation which, inter-alia, seek the formation of National Rural Bank of India (NRBI), withdrawal of guidelines permitting setting up of Local Area Banks and extension of various settlements and agreements between employees/officers of commercial banks and Indian Banks Association (IBA) since 1993 to the employees of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs).

As regards the formation of NRBI by merging all RRBs, various alternatives including merger were considered by Government in the past and it has been decided to revamp the RRBs on a 'stand alone' basis.

With regard to the setting up of private local area banks, it may be stated that these are expected to strengthen the institutional structure for credit delivery in rural and semi-urban areas.

In so far as extension of Sixth Bipartite Settlement Agreement between employees/officers of commercial banks and IBA to the RRBs, the matter was taken by some of the RRB employees to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court, however, did not grant any relief and instead observed that they may seek reliefs available to them under the Industrial Disputes Act. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have recently appointed a three member committee to examine and suggest the changes in the salary and allowances of the employees of RRBs, which may be considered and feasible.

Functions of STC

3160. SHRI AMAR PAL SINGH : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether State Trading Corporation competes with the private sector in terms of trade in the international market;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is prudent for a public sector company to enter areas where the private sector in capable to serve the national interests in view of the liberalised economic policy;

(d) if so, whether the Government propose to revise the existing policy;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) to (f). Consequent upon de-canalisation of import and export of a number of items earlier canalised through STC, the Government have been reviewing the need to re-orient it in a manner consistent with the liberalised economy and a competitive environment. As a process of re-orienting its trading activities in prevalent liberalised environment in a bid to expand its turnover and profitability, STC has already initiated its re-structuring process which includes formation of a Joint ventures with Indian partners to get continuous access to the market strength of its partners as well as to build ensured supply base on committed basis.